CLAIMS

We claim:

1   1. A method of correlating a purchaser of an electronically-purchased item ("EPI")

2   with the EPI, said EPI to be subsequently received by said purchaser, comprising:

3   a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to

4   a seller of said EPI and verification-related digital certificate information is transferred

5   from said seller to said purchaser; and

6   a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said EPI are correlated by requiring

7   said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate information before

8   receiving said EPI and by electronically comparing said verification-related digital

9   certificate information with said EPI.

1   2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said purchasing step includes at least

2   the steps of:

3   creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related

4   digital certificate information; and

5   associating said electronically-readable indicia with said EPI.

1   3. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said verification step comprises:

2   electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from

3   said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said EPI;

4   and

5   comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with

6   verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to

7   receive the EPI.

1   4. The method as set forth in claim 3, wherein the EPI is authorized to be released

2   to said person attempting to receive the EPI only after the EPI is confirmed to have

3   associated therewith verification-related digital certificate information corresponding to the

4   verification-related digital certificate information provided by said receiving party.

1   5.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

1   6.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said

3   EPI.

1   7.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a

3   data file containing data pertaining to said EPI.

1   8. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a smart card.

1   9. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a PDA.

1   10. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a cellular telephone.

1   11. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said electronically-readable indicia

2   comprises bar coding.

1   12. A method of correlating a purchased redeemable ticket with the purchaser of

2   the redeemable ticket, comprising:

3   a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to

4   a seller of said redeemable ticket and verification-related digital certificate information is

5   transferred to said purchaser; and

6   a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said redeemable ticket are correlated

7   by requiring said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate

8   information before receiving said redeemable ticket and by electronically comparing said

9   verification-related digital certificate information with said redeemable ticket.

1   13.   The method as set forth in claim 12, wherein said purchasing step includes

2   at least the steps of:

3   creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related

4   digital certificate information; and

5   associating said electronically-readable indicia with said redeemable ticket.

1   14. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said verification step comprises:

2   electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from

3   said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said

4   redeemable ticket; and

5   comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with

6   verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to

7   receive the redeemable ticket.

1   15.   The method as set forth in claim 14, wherein the redeemable ticket is

2   authorized to be released to said person attempting to receive the redeemable ticket only

3   after the redeemable ticket is confirmed to have associated therewith verification-related

4   digital certificate information corresponding to the verification-related digital certificate

5   information provided by said receiving party.

1   16.   The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

1   17.   The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said

3   redeemable ticket.

1   18.   The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a

3   data file containing data pertaining to said redeemable ticket.

1   19. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a smart card.

1   20. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a PDA.

1   21. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored

3   on a cellular telephone.

1   22. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said electronically-readable

2   indicia comprises bar coding.